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## THE WIND

by Monica C. Kirsch

We overlooked the sand puddled at our feet, ignored the relentless wind. We squinted instead at the horizon's shimmering promise. On one desert hiking trip after another, we disregarded the places where we stopped to drink, and looked ahead only to where we would be in an hour. Open hearts expect the sunrise. Full water bottles feel like abundance. The wind pushed into the narrow space between our bodies and widened it. We walked, our hands joined until they were not.

Year after year the unheeded wind pushed us until we parted, me east, you west. We would walk these dunes again, but alone. I don't know how we got to the now, with me above the sand and you out there within it. Plenty of time in the present, to see the puddles of sand for the first time. My fingers run through the grains, my palms empty.

Did you still admire the desert once you ran out of water? Perhaps only if you ran out on purpose, on the solo hiking trip from which you did not return. Did the desert become your friend or your enemy; did it take a side as you walked into the colorless shimmering heat, sunrise pink long left behind? I wonder if, just when you'd become accustomed to the wind, it stopped and left you in silence. Did you listen to your heart beat until you could not?

There is no darkness, only too much light. You left me to ask questions of the wind.